HEALTH
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URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL OF
CHESTER-LE-STREET

REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

TOGETHER WITH THE

Report of the Sanitary Inspector

FOR THE YEAR

1955

JOHN L. SIDDLE, M.B., B.S. D.P.H.

Norman Ward Ltd.
Low Fell.

1957.

CHESTER-LE-STREET URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council Chambers,
Chester-le-Street.

To the Chairman and Members of the
Chester-le-Street Urban District Council.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The year 1955 is the first complete year for which I have been Medical Officer of Health for the Chester-le-Street Urban District Council.

During the year one outstanding event in connection with housing was the declaration of the first slum clearance areas since the war. These areas included 42 houses and constituted the first step in the Council's five-year slum clearance scheme which has been approved by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. Whilst the general standard of housing in the district is fairly good there are still many houses which can only be dealt with satisfactorily by clearance. Many others which are structurally sound but lack essential amenities will need to be in use for some years.

Another event which was of great importance in relation to public health was the rationing of water. The compulsory restriction on use was postponed for some time by voluntary rationing. However the use of stand-pipes in parts of the town did eventually materialise although fortunately they did not have to be used for very long. Adequate water supplies are essential in order to maintain the health of the community and the fact that rationing had to be introduced, even though the dry weather was perforce to blame, indicates that all steps possible should be taken in the future to improve the available supplies. The demand for water will of necessity increase as the living conditions of the people improve and steps should be taken to provide for this.

With regard to the general state of the health of the population as shown by the statistics one can say that this is satisfactory. The death rate fell slightly as compared with 1954 and the birth rate was slightly higher than that for 1954. The infantile mortality rate was reduced as compared with the previous year and is now just a little above the average for England and Wales. The number of cases of notified infectious diseases rose slightly, mainly due to an outbreak of Measles during the year.

I wish to thank all members of the Council for their support and encouragement during the year and to express my appreciation of the help and co-operation received from the staff.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN L. SIDDLE,
Medical Officer of Health.

HIGHWAYS AND SANITARY COMMITTEE
1955

Councillor J. McGorrigan (*Chairman*)

Coun. N. Holyoake

Coun. R. Moist

Coun. E. Reeve, J.P.

Coun. H. C. Spears

Coun. R. Coulson

Coun. G. Bambrough

Coun. J. Miller

Coun. E. B. Wraith

Coun. Dr. A. M. Bowman

Coun. C. F. C. Lawson, J.P.

Coun. R. Porter

Coun. C. Fenner

Coun. Mrs. N. A. Hearn

Coun. Mrs. D. H. Riddell, J.P.

Coun. L. Usher, J.P.

Coun. N. Riddell

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICERS OF THE AUTHORITY

Medical Officer of Health :—

JOHN LANGLEY SIDDLE, M.B, B.S., D.P.H.

Sanitary and Housing and Shops Inspector :—

GEORGE C. BANKS, M.R.S.I., M.I.S.A.

The Ministry of Health contributes half the salaries of the Medical Officer of Health and the Sanitary Inspector.

STATISTICS AND LOCAL CONDITIONS OF THE AREA

1st April, 1955 — 31*st March*, 1956

Area	2,647	acres
Population, estimated mid-year 1955	18,370	
Number of inhabitated houses	5,890	
terrace houses	2,335	
detached houses	159	
semi-detached	881	
farm houses and cottages	15	
houses and shops combined	60	
council houses	2,440	
	5,890	
Rateable Value	£161,483	
Estimated product of the penny rate	£634	

BIRTH RATE, DEATH RATE AND ANALYSIS OF MORTALITY DURING THE YEAR

	Rate per 1,000 Total Population	Rate per 1,000 Total Births	Annual Death Rate per 1,000 population							Rate per 1,000live Births
	Live Births	Still Births	All Causes	Diphtheria	Whooping Cough	Pneumonia	Influenza	Tuberculosis	Acute Poliomyel-itis including polio-encephalitis	Total Deaths under one year of age
ENGLAND AND WALES	15.0	23.2	11.7	0.0	0.0	0.49	0.07	0.15	0.01	24.9
Great Towns	14.9	23.2	11.6	0.0	0.0	0.53	0.06	0.17	0.01	25.1
Smaller Towns	14.9	23.3	11.6	0.0	0.0	0.45	0.05	0.13	0.0	25.2
CHESTER-LE-STREET	14.9	21.7	11.1	0.0	0.0	0.16	0.05	0.05	0.0	29.2

Population

The Registrar General's estimated mid-year population for 1955 was 18,370 as compared with 18,380 for 1954.

The figures below show the population trend :—

Year	*Population*
1945	16,980
1946	17,820
1947	17,850
1948	18,620
1949	18.620
1950	18,650
1951	18,210
1952	18,140
1953	18,280
1954	18,380
1955	18,370

The population at the 1951 Census was 18,538.

Age distribution at 1951 Census

0—4	1,539
5—14	2,558
15—44	7,934
45—64	4,598
65 & Over	1,909

Births

There were 272 live births during 1955 as compared with 310 during 1954. The respective birth rates being 16.9 in 1955 and 15.95 in 1954.

	Male	*Female*	*Total*	
Live Births				
Legitimate	121	139	260	
Illegitimate	7	5	12	272
Still Births				
Legitimate	2	1	3	
Illegitimate	1	—	1	4

Deaths

There were 204 deaths during 1955. In 1954 there were 212. The Crude Death Rate for 1955 was 11.1 and 11.5 for 1954.

Causes of Death

	Male	*Female*	*Total*
All Causes	106	98	204
Tuberculosis—Respiratory	1	—	1
Syphilitic Disease	—	1	1
Malignant Neoplasm—Stomach	4	—	4
Malignant Neoplasm—Lung Bronchus	4	—	4
Malignant Neoplasm—Breast	—	2	2
Malignant Neoplasm—Uterus	—	3	3
Other Malignant & Lymphatic Neoplasms	6	8	14
Vascular Lesions of the Nervous System	12	15	27
Coronary Disease—Angina	22	26	48
Hypertension with Heart Disease	6	7	13
Other Heart Disease	7	13	20
Other circulatory Disease	11	7	18
Influenza	—	1	1
Pneumonia	1	2	3
Bronchitis	6	—	6
Other Respiratory Diseases	4	—	4
Ulcer of Stomach or Duodenum	1	—	1
Gastritis, Enteritis & Diarrhoea	1	—	1
Nephritis and Nephrosis	—	1	1
Congenital Malformations	—	1	1
Other defined and ill-defined diseases	9	6	15
Motor Vehicle Accidents	3	—	3
All Other Accidents	8	5	13

The following were the chief causes of death during the year :—

Cause of Death.	*Number of Deaths*	*% of Total Deaths*
1. Disaeses of the Heart and Circulatory System	126	62.7
2. Cancer	27	13.2
3. Violence— (Road Traffic Accidents—3) (Other Violent Causes—13)	16	7.8
4. Respiratory Diseases	14	6.8
5. Tuberculosis	1	.49

Disease of the heart and circulatory system continue to be the main cause of death. The percentage of the total deaths for 1955 being 62.7% compared with 53.3% for 1954. The disease which has shown itself even more dangerous than ever before was coronary artery disease, the deaths from this cause numbering 48. Previous reports show a highest figure of 35. Continual research and investigations are being carried out in order to ascertain the reasons for this rise which is general throughout the country. Not until the cause is discovered can we adopt any preventative measures.

Meanwhile, the opinion that the stress, strain and worry is largely to blame, must be accepted and those of us who are able must try to live a more tranquil and calmer existence if we wish to prolong our span of life.

Cancer of the lung once again struck only at males. This year 4 deaths were caused by this disease; the figure for 1954 was 3 deaths.

Deaths as a result of violence rose from 11 to 16. This figure shows that one out of every fourteen deaths in the district was the result of an accident of some kind. These deaths are preventable and indicate the necessity for continued campaigns for Prevention of Accidents.

There was only one death from tuberculosis during the year. This is the lowest figure ever recorded and shows how marked the improvement in treatment of this disease has been in recent years.

INFANTILE MORTALITY

The Infantile Mortality Rate for the year was 29.1 (8 deaths) as compared with 35.1 (11 deaths) in the previous year.

Causes of death under one year of age

Cause of Death.	Under 1 week	1—2 weeks	2—3 weeks	3—4 weeks	Under 1 mth.	1—3 months	3—6 months	6—9 months	9—12 months	Under 1 yr.
Anoxia	2	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	2
Congenital Hydrocephalus	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
Anencephaly	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
Neonatal Asphyxia	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
Acute Intestinal Obstruction	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
Prematurity	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
Failure to Establish Respiration	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1

The infantile mortality rate for the year showed an improvement. All the deaths could be looked on as being due to congenital

defects or resultant from the birth of the child. In no case could we say, in the present state of medical knowledge, that the death was preventable. No deaths occurred in any infants between the ages of 6 months and 1 year.

GENERAL PROVISIONS OF HEALTH SERVICE IN THE AREA

(1) Laboratory Facilities

These continue to be provided by the Public Health Laboratory Service, Newcastle, under the direction of Dr. R. Norton.

Particulars of examinations undertaken are given below :—

Disease	*Positive*	*Negative*
Diphtheria	—	3
Tuberculosis	20	154
Miscellaneous	1	4

(2) Local Health Authority Services

The Administrative County is divided up into twelve areas, Chester-le-Street Urban and Rural Districts forming No. 4 area. For each area, a Health Sub-Committee has been appointed to exercise on behalf of the County Health Committee, certain functions relating to services under the National Health Services Act, 1946.

All day-to-day administration of the County Service is carried out by County Headquarters. The area Medical Officer deputises for the County Medical Officer of Health at quarterly meetings of the Area Sub-Committee.

I am indebted to the County Medical Officer of Health for the statistics concerning the services in this part of the report.

(a) Health Visitor Service

The number of Health Visitors in the area is 2 and the following is a summary of the work done by them during the year :—

Domiciliary Visits.

Maternity and child welfare	3,585
Tuberculosis	448
Mental Deficiency	143
Schools	194
General Health	8
Aged People	27

Summary :—

Ineffective Visits	551
Total number of visits	4,956
Number of effective visits	4,405
Time (as days) spent on visits (routine & ineffective)	198
Average daily number of effective visits per health visitor	22

Clinic, etc. work :—

Time (as days) spent

(*a*)	at maternity and child welfare centres	197
(*b*)	at chest clinics	2
(*c*)	at school head to head inspections	5
(*d*)	at school medical inspections	5
(*e*)	at special schools	10
(*f*)	at school clinics	5

(*b*) *Clinics*

The Mains Farm House, West Lane Clinic is used to provide accommodation for the various clinics run by the County Council ; telephone number 3286.

Ante-natal	Tuesday weekly and alternate Thursday mornings
Child Welfare	Wednesdays weekly
Birth Control, Post-natal	Alternate Thursday afternoons
Artificial Sunlight	Monday afternoons and Thursday mornings weekly

(*c*) *Domiciliary, Midwifery and Home Nursing Services*

This is a Durham County Council Service. Working in the district there are 2 district nurses and 4 district midwives.

A summary of the work done is given below :—

Midwifery.

No. of cases of Midwifery and Maternity	*No. of cases discharged from hospital before 14th day.*
113	117

Home Nursing.

Medical		*Surgical*		*Tuberculosis*		*Total*	
Cases	*Visits*	*Cases*	*Visits*	*Cases*	*Visits*	*Cases*	*Visits*
208	4366	29	525	4	108	241	4999

Included in the above totals are :—

Patients 65 years and over	128 with 2381 visits
Patients 5 years and under	3 with 46 visits

(*d*) *Ambulance Service*

The following figures show the work done by the Chester-le-Street Ambulance Depot during the year :—

		Patients carried			
No. of Calls.	*No. of Journeys.*	*Stretcher*	*Sitting*	*Total*	*Mileage*
7,420	5,412	3,114	17,431	20,545	115,225

The service is run by the County Council. The Chester-le-Street Urban and Rural districts are served principally by the ambulance depot situated at Osborne Road, Chester-le-Street. This depot is in charge of a head driver and has an establishment of 14 drivers and 6 ambulances. All requests for ambulance transport reach the depot via the Durham Control which is manned by a team of four clerk-telephonists maintaining a 24-hour service.

When necessary, either in the interests of economy or in order to reinforce the Chester-le-Street depot, vehicles from neighbouring depots are utilised in the transport of patients in the areas.

Compared with the previous year the number of patients carried has fallen by 504 although the number of journeys travelled has increased by 164 and the miles travelled by 5,944.

(*e*) *Domestic Help*

Domestic helps are provided by the County Council where necessary in cases of sickness, childbirth, infirmity or other household emergencies.

Cases being assisted on 1.1.1955	43
New cases during year	29
Total	72
Cases remaining on 31.12.55	61
Analysis of cases :—	
Old age pensioners	68
Sickness	2
Maternity	1
Tuberculosis	1
No. of Home Helps employed	22

(*f*) *Prevention of Illness and After-Care*

Under this section of the National Health Service the Durham County Council supply nursing requisites on loan to those needing them. A fee is charged, the assessment of which depends on income and the type of article borrowed. All articles are stored in Durham City and have to be brought out to the place where they are required.

(*g*) *School Health Service.*

The School Health Service is run by the Durham County Council from headquarters in Durham City.

The nearest clinic for Chester-le-Street schoolchildren is in Birtley. The clinic is open daily and is attended on Monday and Wednesday by a School Medical Officer.

Routine medical inspections of children are carried out in the schools by a School Medical Officer.

3. Hospital Services

The hospitals in Chester-le-Street are administered by the Durham Hospital Management Committee on behalf of the Newcastle Regional Hospital Board.

Outpatient Clinics

(*a*) *Tuberculosis*

Consultations by appointment at the Chest Clinic, Ropery Lane, Chester-le-Street (Tel. 3317).

(*b*) *Venereal Diseases*

Confidential treatment is provided free at the following centres, appointment not being required :—

(i) Newcastle General Hospital : Tel. 33320 Ncle.
Monday to Friday 9-12 noon and 1.30-7 p.m.
Saturday 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

(ii) County Hospital Durham (Tel. Durham 7)
Female—Monday and Thursday at 2 p.m.
Male—Monday and Thursday at 4.30 p.m.

(*c*) *General Hospital, Chester-le-Street* (*Tel.* : 2001/2/3)

General medical, general surgical, ophthalmic, ear, nose and throat physiotherapy facilities are available, both as in-patients and out-patients (by appointment).

4. Executive Council Service

The executive council for the County of Durham is the body responsible for the administration of the General Practitioner Service in the District.

There are 7 general practitioners residing in the district.

HOUSING

The first slum clearance areas to be declared since pre-war included 42 dwellings. This was the first part of a five-year scheme drawn up under the Rent and Repairs Act 1954 and approved by the Minister of Housing and Local Government.

The work required in dealing with clearance areas involves all departments in quite exacting work, but any such work is well spent when it means the end of unsatisfactory dwellings.

New Houses

The building of houses by the Council has continued satisfactorily so that 105 new houses were provided during the year. This, as compared with other authorities is a very good effort, but when one finds that married couples have to live-in with their in-laws for about eight years before they have any prospect of a house of their own, the figure seems to be inadequate.

The application list for the district showed that approximately 2,000 families were desirous of council houses. This does not give a true picture, in my opinion, of the number who are in *need* of council houses. Many applicants already live in reasonable houses which do not possess all modern amenities and whilst it is understandable that they should wish to have a modern house, the overcrowded cases and the living-in families should, from a health point of view, be dealt with before those already reasonably housed.

The Council's policy with regard to Improvement Grants remains unchanged so that no houses in the district were provided with improved amenities by this means. This method could be used in the district to very good effect as the town possesses many houses which whilst lacking modern amenities are otherwise structurally sound houses.

The provision of housing in the district since the end of the war is shown by the following table.

Year ending 31st March	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955
Temporary Houses	50	30	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
New permanent houses	12	44	66	94	96	50	112	117	105
B.I.S.F. Non-traditional	30	34	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Re-lets (1st Jan.—31st Dec.)	26	56	44	68	45	63	59	81	72

INFECTIOUS DISEASES NOTIFIED DURING 1955

	Under 1 year	1—5 years	6—15 years	16—25 years	26—45 years	46—65 years	66 and Up	All Ages	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total Notifications	Admitted to Hospital
Measles	4	82	45	—	—	—	—	131	59	9	8	7	2	20	20	4	—	1	—	1	131	2
Pneumonia	2	4	—	—	2	—	1	9	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	2	1	9	6
Whooping Cough	2	14	2	—	—	—	—	18	2	—	—	—	—	—	3	2	8	—	2	1	18	1
Puerperal Pyrexia	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2
Dysentery	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Scarlet Fever	—	2	2	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	1	1	—	—	4	4
Tuberculosis (Pul.)	—	1	—	3	10	2	—	16	1	1	4	1	1	1	2	3	—	—	2	—	16	4
Tuberculosis (Non-Pul.)	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	1

Infectious Disease Notifications since 1943

Disease	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955
Cerebro Spinal Fever	—	—	—	1	4	2	—	—	2	—	—	—	—
Smallpox	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Scarlet Fever	68	22	20	17	21	56	51	21	11	34	17	7	4
Diphtheria	20	21	26	25	6	3	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enteric Fever (including Para-Typhoid	—	1	—	—	—	2	1	—	2	1	—	—	—
Pneumonia	28	36	16	15	17	15	14	25	26	17	13	13	9
Erysipelas	11	5	—	2	3	2	2	4	—	2	3	1	—
Opthalmia Neonatorum	5	2	1	2	—	1	1	—	—	2	—	—	—
Puerperal Pyrexia	4	1	—	—	1	1	1	1	1	—	—	1	2
Whooping Cough	5	5	4	13	3	21	4	12	16	34	3	17	18
Measles	112	39	110	29	224	227	90	193	107	181	45	18	131
Food Poisoning	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Poliomyelitis	—	—	1	1	5	—	—	2	—	—	4	1	—
Dysentery	—	—	—	10	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	1
Tuberculosis (Pulmonary)	14	17	14	15	10	9	23	15	15	12	20	15	16
Tuberculosis (Non-Pulmonary)	15	6	12	3	5	3	3	5	5	3	1	4	1

Infectious Disease

The number of cases notified during 1955 was 182 as compared with 80 for 1954. The large increase was due to the large number of cases of Measles in the district.

Scarlet Fever

Only 4 cases were notified in 1955 as compared with 7 in the previous year. This appears to be the smallest figure on record for the district. All cases were moved for treatment in hospital.

Diphtheria

There were once again no notified cases in the district. This is for the sixth consecutive year.

During the year there was a fall in the number of children immunised as compared with 1954.

In 1955, 134 children (0—15 years) received a full course of immunisation and 133 received booster doses, in 1954, 210 children received a full course and 111 received booster doses. The only way whereby we can continue to keep Diphtheria out of the community is by maintaining a high state of immunisation in the child population.

It is estimated that a level of between 60% and 70% of all children must be immunised in order to ensure that the disease is kept at bay.

The level in the Urban area is about 60%.

Number of children (0-15) years who have received a full course of immunisation at any time up to 31.12.55.

Ages at 31.12.55	Under 1 yr.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
Born in year	1955	1954	1953	1952	1951	1950	1949	1948	1947	1946	1945	1944	1943	1942	1941	Total
Number immunised	2	106	152	175	195	161	198	220	269	248	198	266	182	106	144	2,622

Measles

In the report for 1954 it was suggested that we might expect a considerable rise in the number of cases during 1955. This has been the case and 131 cases were notified as compared with 18 in 1954.

Poliomyelitis

No cases were notified during 1955 as compared with one in 1954.

Towards the end of 1955 the Minister of Health made a statement regarding the introduction of a poliomyelitis vaccine.

It is to be hoped that its use will result in the continued absence of this disease from this district.

Whooping Cough

18 cases were notified as compared with 17 for 1954.

There is still no scheme in the district for immunisation against this disease although many general practitioners do immunise children in combination with immunisation against diphtheria.

Tuberculosis

There were 16 new notifications of pulmonary tuberculosis during the year and there was one death from this disease. Only one case of non-pulmonary tuberculosis was notified and there were no deaths from this disease.

The figures for the years since 1949 are given below :—

Year	*Pulmonary Tuberculosis*		*Non-Pulmonary Tuberculosis*	
	Notifications	*Deaths*	*Notifications*	*Deaths*
1949	23	6	3	—
1950	15	8	4	2
1951	15	8	5	1
1952	12	4	3	—
1953	20	7	1	1
1954	15	2	4	—
1955	16	1	1	—

Table showing age and sex distribution of new cases and deaths during 1955

Age Groups	*New Cases*				*Deaths*			
	Respiratory		*Non-respiratory*		*Respiratory*		*Non-respiratory*	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
Under 1 year	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1—4 years	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
5—14 years	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
15—24 years	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
25—44 years	2	8	—	1	—	—	—	—
45—64 years	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65—75 years	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
75 and over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	5	11	—	1	1	—	—	—

As stated in previous reports the number of notifications continues at the same level although the number of deaths continue to fall.

One can only assume from these facts that although modern methods of treatment are having results in that they are preventing people from dying from the disease, our preventive measures are not adequate enough to prevent spread of the disease. It could be also that the increased number of cases kept alive are an added risk in the spread of the disease.

Another step in improving the preventive services has been the introduction of B.C.G. vaccination for school leavers. This scheme was carried out for the first time in this district in 1955. This vaccination will not of course bring any immediate improvement in the number of new cases. It is expected however that the very vulnerable group between the ages 15—25 will derive some protection and in future years will not be affected to such an extent as at present.

School	No. of forms distr'd	Consents		Mantoux			No. vaccinated with B.C.G.	% of Total tested children vaccinated
		No.	% of total distrib'd	No.	Positive	% positive		
Grammar	98	74	80	71	24	34	47	66
Modern	153	93	60	89	27	30	60	67
Total	251	167	67	160	51	32	107	66

The Mass Radiography Unit paid one visit to Chester-le-Street during the year.

The figures produced as a result of the visit are given below :—

	Male	*Female*	*Total*
No. X-rayed Miniature Films	1,117	1,277	2,394
No. recalled for large films	25	17	42
Abnormalities revealed :—			
(1) Pneumoconiosis	30	—	30
Carcinoma of Lung	—	2	2
Others	5	—	5
(2) Tuberculous Conditions :—			
Healed—no further action	4	4	8
Immediate treatment needed	—	1	1
Cases notified	—	1	1
Cases not notified	3	3	6
Cases known prior to M.R. exam.	1	1	2
Failed to attend for clinical exam.	3	1	4

PUBLIC HEALTH AND HOUSING INSPECTOR'S REPORT

It affords me considerable pleasure to submit my contribution to this Annual Report, with special reference to my activities as Public Health and Housing Inspector for the thirty-second year as your Officer for these responsibilities.

An event of importance has occurred before this report was delivered to the hands of the printers when an Act of Parliament known as the Sanitary Inspectors (Change of Designation) Bill received the Royal Assent and thus Sanitary Inspectors are now designated as Public Health Inspectors. Before the Bill was considered by the House of Commons two important bodies representing the profession, the Royal Sanitary Institute and the Institution of Sanitary Engineers had already altered the word 'Sanitary' to 'Health'. Giving support to the Bill, Miss Patricia Hornsby-Smith reminded the House inter alia that "to-day the word 'Sanitary' has come to bear a restricted meaning not associated with health in its widest sense". This new designation should remove the disability many Inspectors experienced in carrying out their functions and should prove an incentive for recruiting more qualified men to the profession.

An extensive housing survey was carried out during 1955 and the result of these inspections will be translated into Slum Clearance

schemes. Housing continues to be a vitally important problem, it having been estimated at Government level that 100,000,000 houses are still needed. There has been a large increase of owner-occupiers since the War and some of these occupy potential slum clearance or sub-standard houses, some of which will come within the scope of the new Housing (Compensation) Bill now contemplated.

With renewed slum clearance activities we are confronted with the perplexing situation created by the uneasy heritage of a number of problem families and the purchase of a number of houses to house these families for an educational probationary period is now being considered.

During the latter part of 1955 Durham County was confronted with an alarming water shortage during which stand-pipes were operating in various parts of the urban area. The Durham County Water Board sought powers to take a larger volume of compensation water from the river and also replenished the reservoirs to some extent from the old coal mines in various parts of the County, also from neighbouring water undertakings.

The new Clean Air Bill now on the Statute Book should materially assist in creating an atmosphere free from pollution.

Smoke abatement inspections have been made during the period under report and some notices were served.

The new Food Hygiene Regulations come into operation in January 1956 and at the time of compiling this report are already operating. This new legislation calls for increasing activities to ensure that the requirements are functioning efficiently.

Privy conversions continue to show steady progress, and the total elimination of these insanitary ash-closets is possible within the foreseeable future.

Factories and Workshops receive attention and inspections are made as frequently as other activities will permit.

Meat and Cattle inspections are daily duties, but only two slaughter-houses are functioning at present.

Milk and Dairies call for frequent attention and the usual investigations of miscellaneous nuisances also absorb a considerable period during every year's work. Some of these nuisances are trivial but become important when considered in the light of public health generally.

Although limited to one officer, every effort is made to satisfactorily meet all duties requiring attention with the least possible delay, and as efficiently as circumstances will permit.

Science marches on with increasing momentum and steam and electricity may soon be superceded by atomic power and highly concentrated atomic-powered automatic workshops and heat-generating systems may become commonplace.

It is more than probable that Public Health Inspectors will soon have to acquaint themselves with a new technique for the protection of the public against Gamma rays, Radio-active fall-outs, and the dangers to health of radio-active wastes, and I am convinced that such new responsibilities will be met with energy and efficiency.

I am, Mr. Chairman and Members,

Your obedient Servant,

GEORGE C. BANKS,
Public Health & Housing Inspector.

Water Supplies

As briefly stated in the introduction of this report, there was a water shortage consequent upon the drought which appeared to be acute in the County Catchment area. At the latter part of the year standpipes were connected in various parts of the Urban area in particularly severe wintry weather, but fortunately only a few at the South end of the town were put into emergency operation.

Not the least anxiety experienced by Council Officials was the maintenance of supervision of these temporary connections to ensure that there was no unauthorised interference liable to cause contamination at these standpipes, but fortunately nothing calculated to affect the health of the community ensued other than the inconvenience experienced by members of the community, including aged persons, who were obliged to draw supplies from these temporary sources. The engineer of Durham County Water Board sent out Circulars to all Local Authorities on September 28th 1955 explaining precautions to be taken if the water was cut off and emphasised the possible consequences of water being carried in buckets and other utensils lacking in cleanliness, and therefore possibly creating contamination by these means. It is pleasing to state that the Durham County Water Board reported (17.8.56) that the Burnhope reservoir has at last filled to normal level.

Of the 8 samples of domestic drinking water submitted to the Public Health Laboratory for bacteriological examination, all were found to be satisfactory.

Food and Drugs Act 1955

Milk and Dairies Regulations 1949-1954

It has been emphatically contended by numerous Medical Officers and Public Health Inspectors that the responsibility for clean milk production should have remained in the hands of the local authorities. Public Health Officers are anything but astonished to learn that Doctors have asked the Minister of Health, Mr. Robert Turton, to receive a deputation to discuss their claim that the responsibility for production should be transferred from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to local councils. It is also reported that the Council of the British Medical Association has already invited the Minister to co-operate in the transfer of this responsibility.

This problem is not new, but it must be apparent to interested parties that Public Health Inspectors and Medical Officers of Health, having intimate knowledge of the Farms in their districts and of the Milk production which is carried out in some cases almost on the doorsteps of Council Offices, are much better situated and informed to carry out these duties than others who may be part of a system of intermittent or remote control.

The Milk supplies of any community, involving as it does the health and welfare of infants and invalids quite apart from other members of the population, is a matter for frequent and close inspection, therefore the legitimate views of local Councils demand careful consideration.

Dairies

Much of the milk now consumed is bottled by the Milk Marketing Boards and there is a tendency on the part of dealers and distributors to regard local dairies as merely loading and temporary storage stations and to a considerable extent this contention is borne out in practice, nevertheless a high standard of cleanliness is still required, and the dairy should conform with these high standards insofar as structural and hot water arrangements are concerned. Although the possibility of contamination is reduced when milk is sold in sealed bottles stringent precautions must still be observed in handling this all-important article of food.

One Public Health Inspector has recommended the use of cartons for the distribution of milk to consumers instead of bottles,

and to some extent the use of such containers is regarded as hygienic and economic, and there is less possibility of contamination, particularly from broken glass.

Regarding glass milk bottles, there have been instances of milk bottles having been used for holding paraffin and other obnoxious fluids. Contamination may take several other forms, there having been cases (not locally) where slugs and dead mice have been discovered in bottles containing milk for consumption.

Milk Supply

Acts and Regulations in Force

(1) The Milk (Special) Designations Act 1949—1955

(2) The Milk and Dairies Regulations 1949—1955

(3) The Milk (Special Designations) (Pasteurised and Sterilised) Regulations 1949.

(4) The Milk (Special Designations) (Raw Milk) Regulations 1949, 1953, 1955.

Licences Issued

	1955
Supplementary Licences to retail Pasteurised Milk	6
Licences to retail Tuberculin Tested Pasteurised Milk	5
Licences to retail Tuberculin Tested Raw Milk	1
Licences to retail Sterilised Milk	25

Milk Samples

During 1955 there were 12 samples of milk submitted to the Ministry of Health Public Health Laboratory for examination and with one exception were found to be satisfactory. The latter sample was subsequently found to have been sent under a wrong designation—otherwise a mistake.

No. of Samples	*Designation.*	*Result.*
2.	Tuberculin tested—Raw	1 conformed to standard 1 did not conform to standard
5	Pasteurised	All conformed to standard
1	Sterilised	do.
4	Tuberculin Tested Pasteurised	do.

In addition two samples of Tuberculin Tested Milk submitted for examination for the presence of tubercule bacilli were found to be negative.

Farms

There are five Farms in the Urban area, and of these only two produce Milk. These premises are now, for the most part, under the control of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, but as stated in the first part of the report on these matters, it is considered that these responsibilities should revert to the control of local authorities.

Ice Cream

There were 5 samples of Ice Cream submitted to the Public Health Laboratory for examination with the following results :—

No. of Samples.	*Result.*
5	Grade 1

Although the matter is frequently brought to the notice of Parliament the grading of Ice Cream is provisional, there being no legal standard for this article of food. The Food and Drugs Act 1955 (now operative) afford additional control but it is contended that the controlling legislation should be more specific. The same observations apply to Ice Lollies which have been known to be manufactured under unsatisfactory conditions and in premises concealed or remote from Public Health Officers.

Artificial Cream

Food and Drugs activities included the taking of four samples of Artificial Cream which were submitted for examination. These samples were found to be Grade 1 and free from B.Coli and were therefore very satisfactory.

Food Hygiene

(1) *The number of food premises in the area, by type of business.*

There are 90 business premises in the Urban area from which food is sold, and are as follows :—

General Dealers	43
Bakers and Confectioners	7
Butchers	10
Greengrocers	10
Fishmongers and Fried Fish Shops	9
Snack Bars and Canteens	11
	90

(2) *The number of food premises, by type, registered under section* 14 *of the Food and Drugs Act, or under local Acts, and the number of dairies registered under the Milk and Dairies Regulations* 1949.

There are 44 premises registered to manufacture or retail ice-cream within the Urban area.

There are 10 butchers' shops in the district wherein sausage etc. is manufactured, but these were all engaged in such production prior to the passing of the Act.

Daries etc., registered in the area :—

	1955
Dairies in the area	3
Supplementary Licences to retail Sterilised Milk	25
Tuberculin Tested	5
Pasteurised	6
Accredited	—

(3) *The number of inspections of registered food premises, with informative comment if necessary.*

Approximately 420 inspections were made of foodshops, canteens and snack-bars. Special attention being directed to the provision and cleanliness of washing facilities and rest rooms (particularly for female staffs) and considerable progress has been made in this matter.

Efforts are now being directed with a view to interesting canteen staffs and administrative personnel in the new sterilising units.

(4) *The method of disposal of condemned food.*

Small quantities are disposed of under the furnaces and boilers at factories and business premises where such facilities are available, and also buried in refuse tips.

For many years it has been contended (see previous Annual Reports) that a suitable incinerator should be provided by the local authority. A skilled operator could be trained by the public health department to attend to the same under the supervision of a qualified officer.

Food Hygiene

The Food and Drugs Act 1955 and the Food Hygiene Regulations come into operation on January 1st 1956. Some provisions of the latter however do not operate until July 1956. Preliminary inspections have already been commenced, but some of the requirements, particularly the provisions concerning washing facilities including the supply of hot water, have already been installed in a number of food establishments.

Some food shops have also provided refrigerator-show cases and glass counter-screens to reduce as far as possible contamination from both customers and members of the staff. There has been a definite advancement in members of food staffs wearing clean overalls and giving more attention to Food Hygiene generally.

SLAUGHTERHOUSES AND MEAT INSPECTION

Slaughterhouses Act 1954
Food and Drugs Act 1955
Memo 3/Foods, February 1st, 1953

As may be expected there has been a substantial change in the picture of local slaughtering since the local Ministry of Food Regional Slaughterhouses relinquished control in July, 1954 and although the number of animals slaughtered locally has been considerably reduced the number of carcases inspected at two of the four licenced slaughterhouses still active is still substantial notwithstanding that a large quantity of meat is purchased "off the hook" from Newcastle-on-Tyne. Two slaughterhouses have been in very little use during 1955, chiefly as a result of shortage of staff and the illness of the owner of one of these premises, but it should be remembered that if it is contemplated to eliminate these slaughterhouses 'by resolution' compensation must be paid by the local authority. In my view however, a clause could be well introduced that where there has been "non-use" over a period of years such premises could be closed without compensation.

One of the most interesting sidelights of the Herbert Committee's report is its recommendation that the Meat Trade should be responsible for meat inspection costs. The interdepartmental Committee's recommendations are allied to the provision of a universal compulsory service at all slaughter points. Needless to say, the recommendation for imposing this charge is resisted by the trade who contend that this is a Public Health Service chargeable to the community in general.

Tuberculosis (Slaughter of Reactors) Order 1951

As most meat and cattle inspectors will agree, tuberculin testing of cattle is the only way by which the disease can be eliminated from our dairy herds and the following table published by the Ministry of Agriculture is evidence of the progress being made :—

Area Eradication Plan for Tuberculosis

	Total Cattle 4th June 1954	*Cattle in attested herds and areas* 31.3.55	
		Number	*% of Total Cattle*
Great Britain	9,777,347	5,157,043	53
England and Wales	8,067,656	3,914,823	49
England	7,004,661	3,116,971	45
Wales	1,062,995	797,852	75
Scotland	1,709,691	1,242,220	73

It has been long held that the focus of danger lies in the possibility of milk infected with organisms of tuberculosis being produced on farms and being consumed by the community. The object to be aimed at is the production of disease-free milk and not mechanical interference in the form of pasteurisation. Many times meat inspectors have found extensive tuberculosis in animals from dairy herds and visualised with trepidation the possible damage done by such animals before being brought for slaughter.

It has been noticeable in many areas during the past few years that the amount and extent of tuberculosis in bovines discovered in slaughterhouses has revealed a marked tendency to decrease, allowing for the fact that the resumption of public buying has resulted in greater discrimination by buyers and that most of the "screw" meat now goes to the knackers directly, there can be little doubt that the Area Eradication Plan for Tuberculosis is making an increasing contribution to a sound meat supply.

Meat Condemned in 1955

Month	*Amount*	
	Cwts.	*Lbs.*
January	—	80
February	5	2
March	1	—
April	—	86
May	1	64
June	—	76
July	3	—
August	1	50
September	4	42
October	—	40
November	1	56
December	1	69

It is satisfactory to report that several improvements have been carried out at the two slaughterhouses at present operating. No cases of foot and mouth were reported and no swine fever or Anthrax was discovered during the period under report. Much of the localised conditions responsible for the condemnation of bovine livers was due to Distomatosis with its sequelae of Cirrhosis and similar abnormalities. No tuberculosis was found on any of the sheep carcases inspected, but one such case was reported from another part of the Country, the animal, as a pet, had been fed on cows milk.

Carcases Inspected and Meat Condemned

	Cattle excluding Cows	*Cows*	*Calves*	*Sheep and Lambs*	*Pigs*	*Total*
Number Inspected	758	65	24	2,271	759	3,877
All diseases except Tuberculosis :						
Whole carcases condemned	—	—	—	1	—	1
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	6	15	—	36	25	82
Percentage of the number inspected affected with disease other than Tuberculosis	0.79	23.08	—	1.63	3.29	—
Tuberculosis only :						
Whole carcases condemned	—	—	—	—	—	—
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	18	13	—	—	15	46
Percentage of the number inspected affected with Tuberculosis	2.37	20.00	—	—	1.98	—

Canned Foodstuff Destroyed

It is encouraging to report that there has been a considerable reduction in the quantity of canned foodstuffs found to be unsound, as will be seen from the following figures :—

	Tons	*Cwts.*	*Lbs.*
1953	3	8	57
1954	—	18	10
1955	—	18	6

Inspection has disclosed that the packing of goods and the greater care taken in transit have been undoubtedly responsible for this reduction in damaged goods but these observations do not of course apply to those items of foodstuffs, particularly canned meat, which were condemned by reason of being putrefactive as a result of blown or imperfectly sterilised or sealed tins.

The present arrangements for dealing with unsound foodstuffs are inadequate and it is repeated that the burying of such unsound foodstuffs in refuse tips is unreliable and dangerous and calculated to attract rats. Incineration is the real remedy and the need for the provision of a suitable incinerator is again emphasised.

Radiation and Public Health

It would be inexcusable presumption on my part to attempt to write with authority on Radiation technique with its numerous scientific complications, but a few brief references will be sufficient to indicate the public health aspect of irradiation.

Fission Product Research Workers are even now concentrating on methods of utilizing radio-active wastes, and Radio isotopes knowledge has already been directed to improving public health. Radiated meat has been proved to destroy organisms and render meat safe, and has also been effective in destroying Bovine Cysticerosis which has already loomed large as a national public health problem. Of most immediate interest have been the experiments wherein irradiation has been successfully employed for destroying the organisms in food without destroying the taste, but attempts to pasteurise Milk by irradiation were not satisfactory as they produced sourness and smell. There is no doubt that stupendous progress has been made in the matter of radiation and public health which will revolutionise preconceived contentions of this particular aspect.

RODENT CONTROL

The problem of Rodent Control although it has not reached the stage of numerous major infestations, remains a responsibility which demands constant vigilance and attention.

One dwellinghouse, from which rats are cleared and reappear at intervals, is still receiving attention from both the Rodent Operator and your Officer. The concrete yard has been taken up and foundation walls rat-proofed and the drains smoke-tested but rats continue to enter the premises notwithstanding that the adjacent sewer has been treated from time-to-time. It is now suspected that these objectionable vermin may be coming from some old field drain or ancient conduits which are known to be in the neighbourhood. Our activities continue to be directed to tracing the source of entry after which the solution will be simplified.

Warfarin and Zinc Phosphide continue to be the chief posion agents used locally for rat extermination.

In the operation for sewer treatment it is sometimes found that not all manholes are suitable for baiting. Very wet manholes and those subject to sudden flooding by storm water present the greatest difficulty.

Your Officer attended demonstrations organised by the Divisional Rodent Officer in which a one-man implement for heavy manhole cover-lifting was found to be extremely helpful.

It has been found that Zinc Phosphide has given the most consistent results in sewers but the absence of reliable means of estimating the actual number of rats destroyed excludes the satisfaction of stating specific figures.

Our experience confirms that under reasonable circumstances successful results in exterminating small infestations may be achieved by Warfarin.

As with many other Authorities the disposal of household refuse on tips sited on open ground and local sewage disposal works are situations which require the most attention. There have been persistent degrees of infestation at the Co-operative field refuse tip and unremitting attention is being directed to the locality.

Regarding agricultural land we operate in close co-operation with the Rodent Officer of the County Agricultural Committee and the Divisional Rodent Officers.

PREVENTION OF DAMAGE BY PESTS ACT, 1949

Report for 12 months ended 31st March, 1956

	Type of Property				
	Non-Agricultural				
	(1) Local Authority	(2) Dwelling Houses (inc. Council Houses)	(3) All Other (including Business Premises)	(4) Total of Cols. (1), (2) & (3)	(5) Agri-cultural
I. Number of properties in Local Authority's District	67	5794	691	6552	15
II. Number of properties inspected as a result of :					
(*a*) Notification	—	58	23	—	—
(*b*) Survey under the Act	65	63	24	—	—
(*c*) Otherwise (e.g., when visited primarily for some other purpose	—	—	—	—	—
III. Total inspections carried out—including re-inspections	245	127	49	—	—
IV. Number of properties inspected (in Sect. II) which were found to be infested by :					
(*a*) Rats Major	1	—	—	—	—
Minor	8	24	23	—	—
(*b*) Mice Major	Nil	—	—	—	—
Minor	Nil	62	11	—	—
V. Number of infested properties (in Sect. IV) treated by the L.A.	9	86	34	—	—
VI. Total treatments carried out–including re-treatments	22	116	31	—	—
VII. Number of notices served under Section 4 of the Act :					
(*a*) Treatment	—	—	1	—	—
(*b*) Structural Work (i.e., Proofing)	—	1	—	—	—
VIII. Number of cases in which default action was taken following the issue of a notice under Sect. 4 of the Act	—	—	—	—	—
IX. Legal Proceedings	—	—	—	—	—
X. Number of "Block" control schemes carried out	1	—	—	—	—

SUMMARY OF WORK DONE IN THE SANITARY INSPECTOR'S DEPARTMENT DURING THE YEAR 1955

	No. of inspections	*No. of informal Notices served*	*No. of Statutory Notices served*	*Defects remedied after Notice*
Housing :				
Public Health and Housing Acts	643	37	2	39
Overcrowding	—	—	—	—
Sanitary Conveniences :				
Insufficient	85	25	—	25
Defective	—	10	—	10
Drainage	45	15	—	15
Water Supply	—	3	—	3
Food Premises	225	3	3	3
Shops Act	235	—	—	—
Dairies	56	2	2	2
Slaughter Houses :				
Public	340	—	—	—
Private	—	—	—	—
Tents, Vans, etc.	10	1	1	1
Offensive Trades	45	—	—	—
Factories & Workplaces	125	1	—	1
Keeping of Animals	—	—	—	—
Insanitary Ashpits and Receptacles	60	35	—	35
Offensive accumulations	12	5	—	5
Smoke Nuisances	32	2	—	2
Prevention of Damage by Pests Act, 1949	141	—	1	1
TOTAL	2,054	139	9	142

Ashpit privies converted into water-closets	—
Ash-closets converted into water-closets	25
Total number of water-closets in District	5,341
Total number of ash-closets in District	159
Total number of ash-pit privies in District	—

Refuse Disposal and Scavenging

Public cleansing is an essential Service which directly affects the health and amenities of the community. It is, therefore important that it should be performed as hygienically and efficiently as possible. In order to ensure this, frequent collection is imperative and is not always possible in view of the labour shortage encountered in some districts.

Where there are a number of ash-closets and ash-pits the matter can become vexatious as it is practically impossible to clear these obsolete receptacles without nuisance, particularly when there is a strong breeze blowing. The ideal is a small domestic bin emptied

daily but this high standard is difficult to attain until a more hygienic and pleasing system can be discovered for dealing with domestic refuse.

Refuse collection in the Urban area is effected by 5 lorries of the Fordson type, one of which is open, and one horse-drawn cart. There is some possibility of using no further horses after the present animal has ceased service.

Tipping is carried out at the Co-operative field, the North Approach road and Whitehill, Pelton Fell. The law relating to the supply and maintenance of dust bins becomes more complicated. It now appears that either the owner or occupier can be requested to supply a refuse receptacle subject to the right of appeal by the party on whom notice has been served.

The purchase of a mechanical road sweeper is now being considered and this vehicle should expedite street cleansing. It appears however that hand-sweeping will still be necessary for the sweeping of pavements. Human ingenuity will possibly devise a small one-man operated sweeper capable of being effectively used in channels and on pavements.

The problem of refuse disposal is becoming acute in some parts of the country and has been created by the rapidly diminishing sites for tipping on open ground. The uncontrolled tipping of refuse on such sites cannot be regarded as satisfactory and is contrary to hygienic practice. It will be readily understood that household refuse tends to attract rats and is a prolific breeding ground for flies.

There is also an increasing tendency on the part of unauthorised persons trespassing on the refuse tips for the purpose of taking rags and other salvage. This undesirable practice is illegal and is liable to carry infection into homes and schools. Needless to say such trespassers should be prevented from pursuing these activities even if summary action becomes unavoidably necessary.

Sewage Disposal

The unusually wet summer has increased the volume of sewage for treatment but the Chester-le-Street Sewage Disposal Works continue to operate satisfactorily. The sewer from Chester Moor has an outfall on the Chester-le-Street disposal plant and continues to operate satisfactorily. Sewage from the North Lodge in the Rural area is treated locally and negotiations continue with regard to the possible disposal of sewage from other parts of the Rural area receiving treatment at the Chester-le-Street Sewage Disposal

Works. There has been a considerable improvement in the condition of the local Burn since alterations have been effected at the Alma and Waldridge disposal plants.

The effect of certain detergents in corroding the metals used in sanitary fittings is now being investigated by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. In some parts of the country the large volume of foam from detergents discharging into sewage disposal works has been a matter causing some concern but expert opinion has been expressed that such foam does not materially add to river pollution or contribute largely to the destruction of fish in such streams.

HOUSING

Although substantial progress has been made and is still being made, the housing situation locally remains a major problem. The Council have several council estates in the area and these are situate at Chester Moor, Chester-le-Street (west), Hillside, Northlands, South Pelaw, North View and Pelton Fell. In addition the new estate at Red Rose is now complete and the Waldridge Lane scheme when completed, with its superb situation on elevated land and unparelled outlook should afford the utmost satisfaction. There is also a further small scheme in operation on the Pelaw Bank allotment land which has been cleared for this estate.

Legislation

Legislation with respect to the clearance of unfit houses has made substantial progress since the Housing Act of 1930. The Act of 1936, still the principal Act, consolidated the provisions of the 1930 Act and the overcrowding provisions of the Housing Act 1935. The Housing Act, 1936 is amended by the Housing Repairs and Rents Act 1954. The standards of unfit houses have, however, been varied considerably, as will be seen in the revised definition of unfitness wherein the failure of a dwelling house to meet with byelaws cannot now be invoked, but the bad arrangement as applied to houses and other buildings may be conditions which may materially support the case for slum clearance in some cases.

Housing Repairs and Rents Acts 1954

Standard of fitness for Human Habitation

In determining for any purposes of the principal Act whether a house is unfit for human habitation, regard shall be had to its condition with regard to the following matters, that is to say :—

(*a*) Repair

(*b*) Stability

(*c*) Freedom from Damp

(*d*) Natural Lighting

(*e*) Ventilation

(*f*) Water Supply

(*g*) Sanitary conveniences and facilities for storage, preparation and cooking of food, and the disposal of waste water.

It will be seen that the standards of fitness are much more rigid than in the principal Act, in that the defects must be such as to warrant demolition (Slum Clearance) on one count only. Under the Housing Act 1936 the terms were much more elastic, i.e., if there were an accumulation of defects in a greater or lesser degree, those factors would form reasonable grounds for slum clearance. In these respects, therefore, there is some disability imposed on local authorities to meet what may be described as a legislative handicap.

New Houses Built during the Year

New Houses completed during the year	*With State Assistance*	*Unaided*	*Total*
By Local Authority	105	—	105
By any other Housing Authority	Nil	—	Nil
By Private Persons	Nil	12	12

HOUSING SURVEY

During several months of 1955 an extensive survey was made of dwelling houses in the Urban area with the object of :—

(1) Reporting to the Council regarding the probable number of unfit houses and the situation of the same which should be included for Slum Clearance.

(2) Submitting to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government the number of houses which should be dealt with in the next five years.

For the purpose of this survey 460 houses were inspected and at the meeting of the Housing Committee held in July 1955 the following properties were submitted as coming within the scope of subsequent consideration as part of the five year plan.

Situation of Premises		*No. of houses*	
Chester-le-Street			
Albert Square	24, 25	2	
Church Chare	7, 8, 9, 9a, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15	9	
Foundry Lane	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9	6	
Front Street	170, 172, 174	3	
Furnace Terrace	1—12 inc.	12	
Furnace Farm House & Cottages		3	
Jubilee Yard	1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13	11	
Kings Head Yard	1—5 inc.	5	
Rowes Bldgs, Low Chare	1—6 inc.	6	
Middle Chare	49, 51	2	
Nicholsons Buildings	6—13 inc.	8	
Canada Cotts., North Burns	39, 41	2	
North Burns	25, 26, 27, 28	4	
Victoria Place	159—175 inc.	9	
West Lane	4. 5, 6	3	
		—	85
Pelton Fell			
Club Row	12—20 inc.	10	
Halls Buildings	11	1	
Shop Houses	1, 2, 3	3	
South View	1—11 inc.	11	
Thornton Street	1—10 inc.	10	
Tinkler's Corner	1, 2	2	
		—	37
Chester Moor			
Church Street	1—4 inc.	4	
Elm Street	17—27 inc.	10	
Front Street	1—14 inc.	14	
Oak Street	1—5 inc.	5	
Pine Street	1—35 inc.	33	
Union Cottages	1—4 inc.	4	
Union Lane	1—40 inc.	38	
		—	108
	Total		230

Closing and Demolition of Houses

A. Formal Action

(i) No. of houses demolished during year as a result of Clearance Schemes or other formal action 2

(ii) No. of houses closed but not demolished as a result of formal action —

(iii) No. of houses in Clearance Areas and individual unfit houses demolition of which temporarily postponed —

(iv) No. of houses in use as temporary accommodation. (Housing, Repairs, and Rents Act, 1954. Part 1.) —

B. Informal Action

(i) No. of houses permanently discontinued as dwellings as a result of informal action and not included above —

3. **Reconditioning and Repair**

No. of houses made fit during year by procedure under Housing Acts (excluding temporary accommodation) or Public Health Acts

(*a*) As a result of informal action 39

(*b*) By owners as a result of statutory notice 2

(*c*) By Local Authority in default of owners —

4. **Improvement Grants—Housing Act, 1949**

		No. of separate houses
(*a*)	Applications submitted to Local Authority	1
(*b*)	Applications rejected by Local Authority	1
(*c*)	Total No. of applications approved since inception of scheme	2

Ashclosets

The fact that there are still over a 150 of these obsolete type of conveniences in the Urban area tends to cast a shadow over the considerable advances being made locally. At the end of 1955 there were 159 ashclosets in the Urban district which were situated as follows :—

North Ward	*South Ward*	*Central Ward*	*West Ward*	*Pelton Fell Ward*	*Chester Moor Ward*
32	54	20	6	47	—

There were 25 conversions carried out during 1955 and the Surveyor's department is now engaged with six conversions at Stella Terrace and in the near future a further 3 conversions will be done at Newfield Terrace.

It has been repeatedly emphasised in many Annual Reports that these conveniences are unhygienic and contrary to modern conceptions of health standards. The question of a scheme for the removal of the remainder of these unpleasant receptacles, or to consider an increase in the grant as an inducement to property owners to convert these dust-traps into water closets will soon receive the investigation the circumstances undoubtedly justify. It must also be remembered that the cost of clearing domestic refuse from ashclosets and a certain degree of nuisance from offensive dust must not be disregarded. Economically and hygienically the dust bin is the immediate solution.

FACTORIES ACTS, 1937 & 1948

PART I OF THE ACT

1.—INSPECTIONS for purposes of provisions as to health (including inspections made by Public Health Inspectors)

Premises (1)	M/c line No. (2)	Number on Register (3)	Number of			M/c line No. (7)
			Inspections (4)	Written notices (5)	Occupiers prosecuted (6)	
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities	1	—	—	—	—	1
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority	2	51	125	4	Nil	2
(iii) Other Premises in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority (excluding out-workers' premises	3	2	6	—	—	3
TOTAL		53	131	4	—	

2.—CASES IN WHICH DEFECTS WERE FOUND

(If defects are discovered at the premises on two, three or more separate occasions they should be reckoned as two, three or more "cases")

Particulars (1)	M/c line No. (2)	No. of cases in which defects were found				Number of cases in which prosecutions were instituted (7)	M/c line No. (8)
		Found (3)	Remedied (4)	Referred To H.M. Inspector (5)	Referred By H.M. Inspector (6)		
Want of cleanliness (S.1)	4	2	2	—	—	—	4
Overcrowding (S.2)	5	—	—	—	—	—	5
Unreasonable temperature (S.3)	6	—	—	—	—	—	6
Inadequate ventilation (S.4)	7	—	—	—	—	—	7
Ineffective drainage of floors (S.6)	8	—	—	—	—	—	8
Sanitary Conveniences (S.7)—							
(*a*) Insufficient	9	—	—	—	—	—	9
(*b*) Unsuitable or defective	10	2	2	—	—	—	10
(*c*) Not separate for sexes	11	—	—	—	—	—	11
Other offences against the Act (not including offences relating to Outwork)	12	—	—	—	—	—	12
TOTAL	60	4	4	—	—	—	60

ATMOSPHERIC POLLUTION

At the time of compiling this report some very important legislation reached the statute book, namely the Clean Air Act, 1956, which received the Royal assent on July 5th 1956 and no doubt the various aspects and implications of this Act will be fully considered in the Annual report for 1956. However, it may be mentioned that a most important feature of the Act is that for the first time the emission of dark smoke—that is smoke darker than a prescribed density—is positively prohibited. In addition it may

be usefully stated that the Alkali inspectorate of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government have been responsible for dealing with pollution from various industrial and chemical processes. Their duties are now extended and local authorities may in some instances be relieved of responsibility for dealing with pollution from certain processes.

Some of the chief causes of black smoke emission locally have in a number of instances been due to the direct feed vertical boilers used at some colliery baths. The new system of underfeed stoking may do much to reduce if not completely eliminate smoke nuisances from these vertical boilers.

This mechanical underfeed stoker is a successful underfeed firing method incorporating near-perfect combustion qualities, automatic control and smokeless fuel. The chief principle of the mechanical apparatus referred to is the Archimedean screw feed worm rotating between the fuel hopper and the retort. This retort where combustion takes place, and the vents which provide air distribution to the fuel bed, are scientifically designed to burn graded gas coke efficiently and economically.

Most of the colliery winding apparatus and factories locally are electrically operated and cause no nuisance, however, it was necessary to serve two notices requiring abatement of smoke nuisances at one coal burning factory. In both cases the causes were attributed to a defect in the mechanical feed apparatus.

The Clean Air Bill above-mentioned comes into operation on an appointed day or a series of appointed days, the first of which is expected to commence within a period of eighteen months from the passing of the Act. Smokeless zones, an important feature of the new legislation, are included in the new legislation. Smoke control which excludes certain residential and commercial buildings comes into operation on a day which also has to be determined. Apart from the offending domestic range, electrification seems to be the real answer.

On Wednesday, October 17th, 1956, Her Majesty the Queen operated the switch at Calder Hall which set into motion a stupendous source of potential atomic-generated electric energy. In the initial stage 10,000 kilowatts will be fed into the National Grid, but next year it is expected to be increased to "92,000 kilowatts or more". This marvellous scientific innovation will mean cheaper electricity for domestic and industrial purposes. The achievement of Calder Hall means the peaceful use of atomic energy, with all its stupendous possibilities and consequences.

This cheap electricity may ultimately mean a sweeping reduction in the number of coal burning domestic fire-grates and factories which in turn will be reflected in a material reduction in atmospheric pollution caused by the general emission from coal combustion and similar causes.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS

The end of 1955 has witnessed great progress in the Urban area. There are many examples of this forward movement to be seen in all parts of the district.

As will be known the erection of Council houses is now proceeding without pause, and there are additional sites being cleared and developed.

The removal of the objectionable and primitive ash-closets continues to make steady progress.

Slum Clearance has again been speeded up under the direction of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and extensive repairs have been effected to a number of houses under the Housing Repairs and Rents Act 1954.

The Park and Riverside has become very popular and the extension of the pleasant paths and other amenities continues to effect a profound transformation of that important natural asset now becoming popular with people from various parts of the County.

The Food Hygiene Regulations have already been anticipated and will ensure an improvement in the standard of local food hygiene and precautions against contamination.

The acute shortage of Public Health Inspectors is causing considerable concern throughout the Country. Public Health Inspectors responsibilities (Housing, Food Hygiene, Meat Inspection, Air Pollution etc.) are growing more onerous each year, but the numbers of experienced and qualified Inspectors are growing less. It has been stated that the increasing demands of industry is to some extent providing a very strong counter-attraction. In the meantime, a new Public Health Examination Board has been established and it is expected that a satisfactory solution to the problem of this prevailing scarcity of inspectors will be forthcoming.

Finally, your Public Health Inspector would like to express gratitude to those who have furnished information for incorporation in this section of the Annual Report.